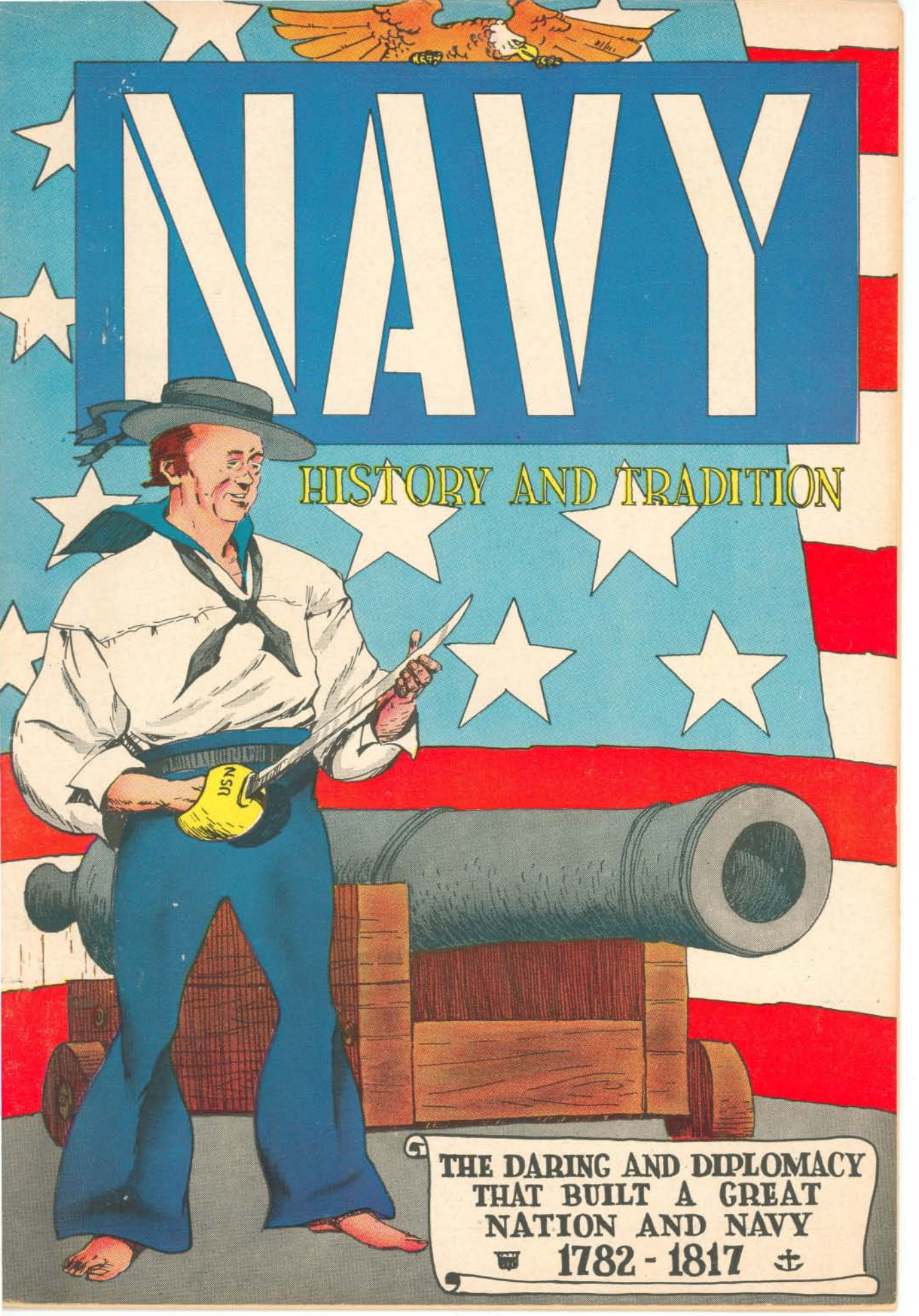
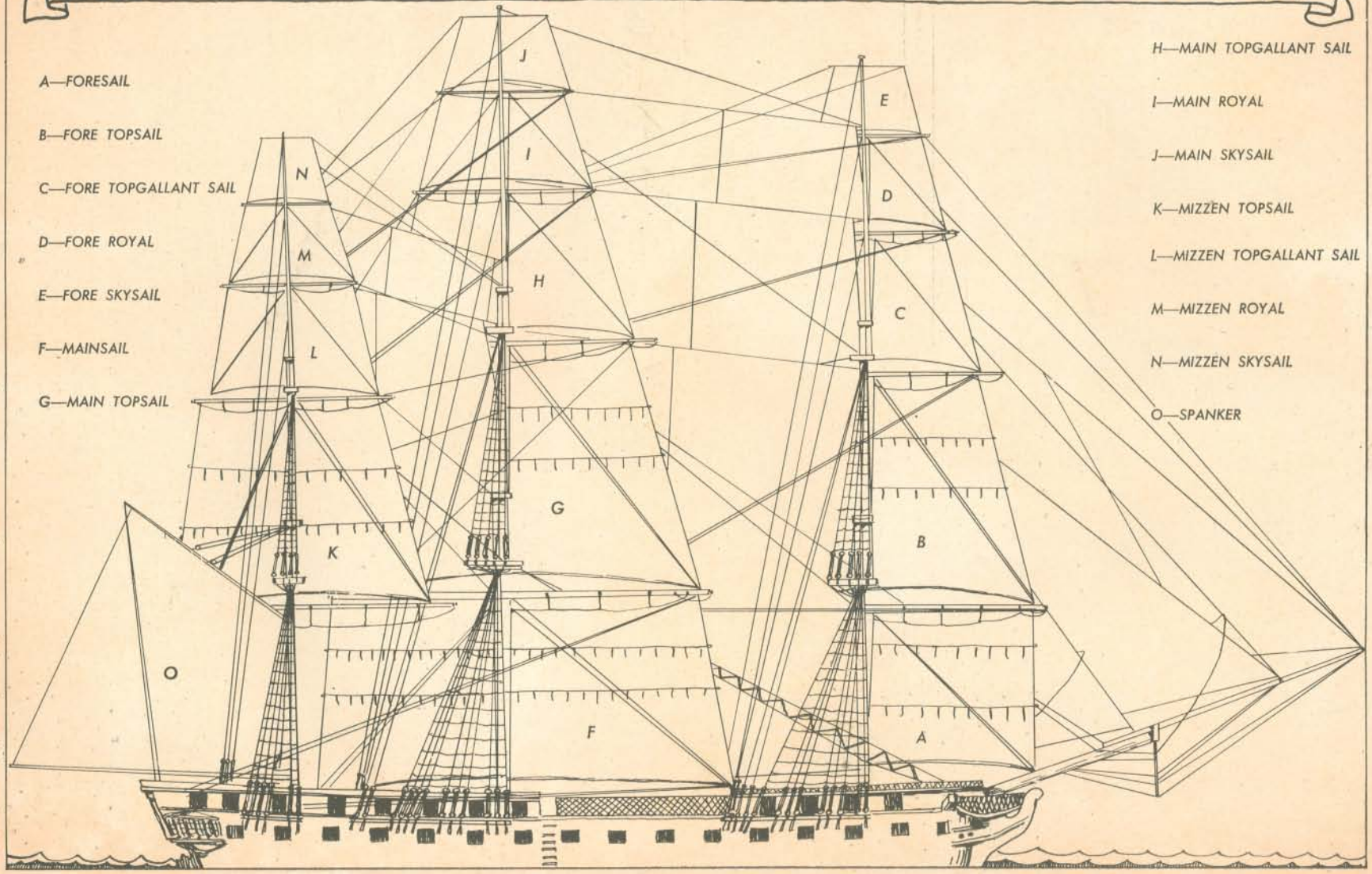
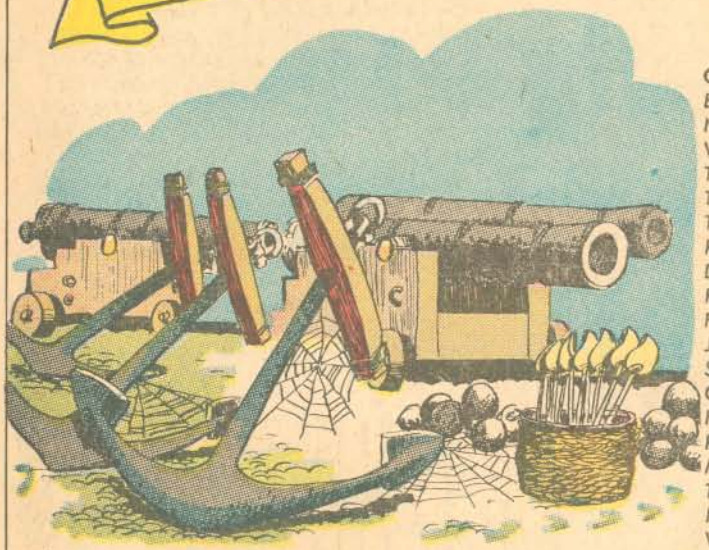

NAVY
HISTORY AND TRADITION
USN
THE DARING AND DIPLOMACY
THAT BUILT A GREAT
NATION AND NAVY
1782 - 1817

SAIL AND RIGGING PLAN CONSTITUTION



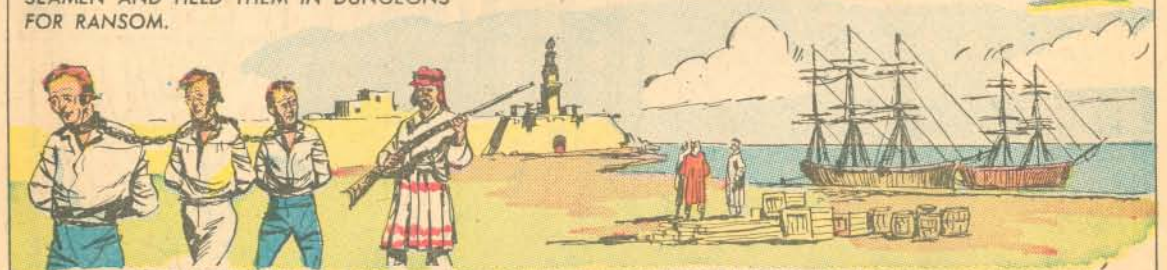
By STOKES WALESBY and THEODORE ROSCOE. © 1958 Copyright by Stokes Walesby, Wash., D. C.

LAUNCHING THE U.S. NAVY



ONCE UPON A TIME (AS OLD STORY-BOOKS USED TO PUT IT) THE AMERICAN NATION WAS WITHOUT A NAVY. THAT WAS WAY BACK ON THE CALENDAR IN THE YEARS BETWEEN 1784 AND 1794—THE TIME RIGHT AFTER THE REVOLUTION. THE OLD CONTINENTAL NAVY OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR HAD BEEN DISBANDED. THE LITTLE WARSHIPS ROTTED AT THEIR MOORINGS. UNPAID FOR THEIR HEROIC SERVICES, PAUL JONES AND JOSHUA BARNEY AND SOME OF THE OTHER GREAT AMERICAN CAPTAINS WENT ABROAD TO ENLIST IN FOREIGN NAVIES. THE NEW AMERICAN REPUBLIC DID NOT HAVE A SINGLE MAN-OF-WAR ON THE SEA. NO NAVY? THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN FINE IF OTHER NATIONS HAD BEEN PEACEFUL. BUT—! WHILE AMERICAN ANCHORS RUSTED ON WHARVES AND CANNON CORRODED ON PIERS, BRITAIN RULED THE ATLANTIC AND YANKEE SHIPPING FELL PREY TO BARBARY PIRATES.

THOSE EARLY AMERICANS WERE UP-AND-COMING PEOPLE. WE THINK OF THEM AS RUGGED PIONEERS, CHOPPING WOOD AND BUILDING LOG CABINS. YES, BUT THEY DID A LOT OF SEA PIONEERING, TOO. THE NATION HAD AN OCEAN AS WELL AS A FOREST FRONTIER—A SEA FRONTIER THAT EXTENDED ALL THE WAY FROM MAINE TO FLORIDA. THE YANKEES HAD SALT WATER IN THEIR VEINS. THEY WERE EXPERT SAILORS AND MASTER SHIPBUILDERS, AND THEIR LITTLE SAILING VESSELS WENT PIONEERING LIKE COVERED WAGONS OF THE SEA. COMMERCIALLY MINDED, THEY CARRIED AMERICAN FURS AND AMERICAN PRODUCTS TO FOREIGN SHORES FOR TRADE. BUT BRITAIN AND FRANCE DISLIKED THIS YANKEE COMPETITION. IN THE MEDITERRANEAN THE FEROCIOUS BARBARY PIRATES KIDNAPPED AMERICAN SEAMEN AND HELD THEM IN DUNGEONS FOR RANSOM.

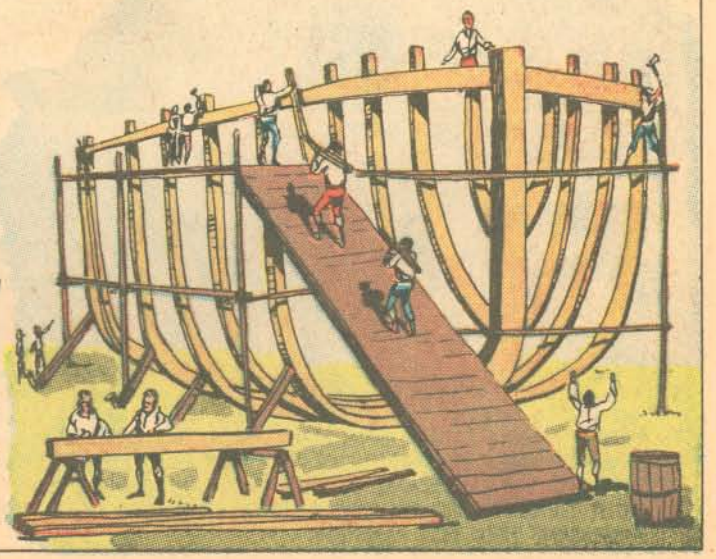


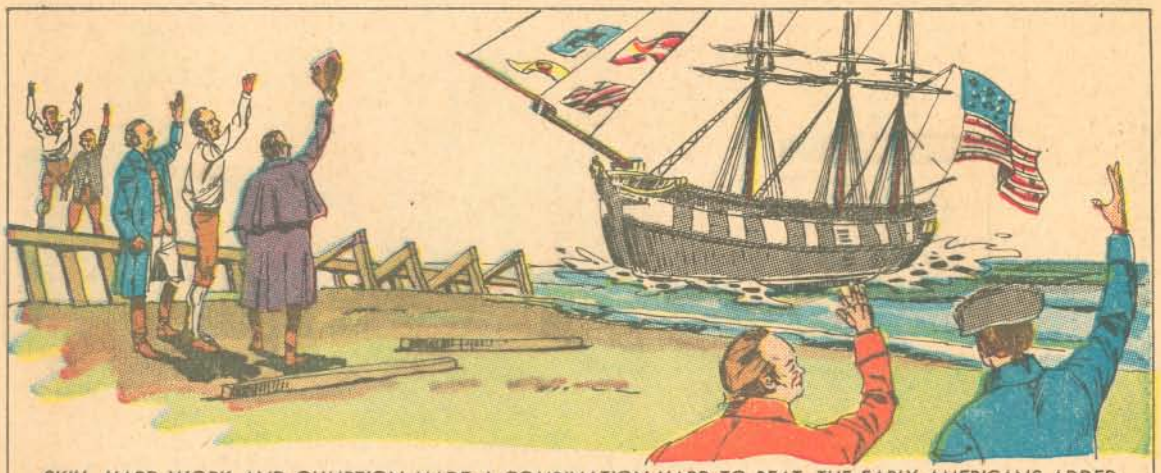
MOROCCO, ALGIERS, TUNIS, TRIPOLI—THE BARBARY STATES WERE RANGED LIKE WOLF-DENS ALONG THE MEDITERRANEAN COAST OF NORTH AFRICA. LIKE WOLVES, THEIR CORSAIRS (CRUISERS) LAY IN WAIT FOR UNARMED SHIPS. FOR CENTURIES THEY HAD ENJOYED A RICH RANSOM RACKET, AND THEY CHEERFULLY INCLUDED THE AMERICANS. IN 1785 THEY CAPTURED THE BOSTON SCHOONER **MARIA**, AND DRAGGED EIGHT YANKEES INTO SLAVERY. THEN THEY GRABBED THE **DAUPHIN** FROM PHILADELPHIA—21 MORE AMERICANS HELD FOR RANSOM!

FOR NINE YEARS THE AMERICANS PUT UP WITH IT. THE NEW NATION WAS NOT YET ORGANIZED, AND THE GOVERNMENT WAS FEEBLE. SO CONGRESS PAID THROUGH THE NOSE. AND THE BARBARY PIRATES UPPED THE RANSOM. MOROCCO DEMANDED $10,000 IN TRIBUTE—PAY UP "OR ELSE." THEN TRIPOLI ASKED $150,000. ALGIERS SENT A FABULOUS RANSOM NOTE—$6,000 FOR KIDNAPPED CAPTAINS, $4,000 FOR MATES, $1,400 FOR EVERY SEAMAN. IN 1794 THE ALGERINE CORSAIRS SNATCHED ELEVEN AMERICAN SHIPS AND HELD 105 YANKEES FOR RANSOM. PRESIDENT GEORGE WASHINGTON SAW RED. SO DID THOMAS JEFFERSON. "TRIBUTE OR WAR IS THE USUAL ALTERNATIVE WITH THESE BARBARY PIRATES," JEFFERSON WROTE. "WHY NOT BUILD A NAVY AND DECIDE ON WAR? WE CANNOT BEGIN IN A BETTER CAUSE OR AGAINST A BETTER FOE."

SICK OF PIRACY, KIDNAPPING AND BLACKMAIL, THE EARLY AMERICANS DECIDED TO FIGHT. "IF WE MEAN TO HAVE A COMMERCE," WROTE THE AMERICAN MINISTER FROM SPAIN, "WE MUST HAVE A NAVY TO PROTECT IT." JOHN ADAMS AGREED. HE THOUGHT THE OCEAN SHOULD BELONG TO ALL MANKIND. BUT HE WROTE: "THE DOMINANT POWER WILL FOREVER TRAMPLE ON IT." THE EARLY AMERICANS REFUSED TO BE TRAMPLED. SO, IN 1794, CONGRESS VOTED TO BUILD SIX FRIGATES FOR THE PROTECTION OF AMERICAN COMMERCE.

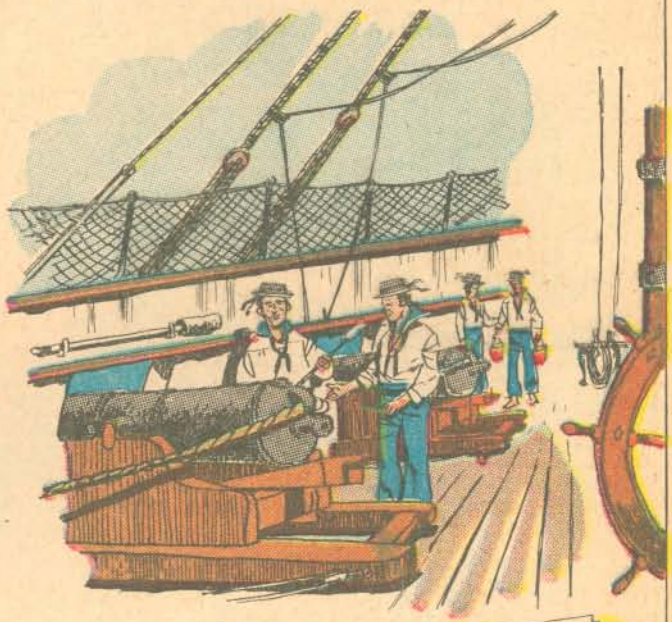
SIX WARSHIPS TO PROTECT AMERICAN COMMERCE ON THE SEVEN SEAS! NOT MUCH OF A NAVY IN A WORLD OF ENEMIES. BUT DURING THE REVOLUTION THE AMERICANS HAD LEARNED HOW TO DO A LOT WITH A LITTLE. NOW THEY MIXED SKILL WITH HARD WORK AND GUMPTION TO DO EVEN MORE. TIMBER FROM THE FORESTS. SAILCLOTH FROM SPINNING WHEELS. ANCHORS FROM BLACKSMITH SHOPS. CANNON FROM FORGES. AND DOWN THE WAYS CAME THE HOMESPUN FRIGATES—**CONSTITUTION** AT BOSTON, **PRESIDENT** AT NEW YORK, **UNITED STATES** AT PHILADELPHIA, **CONGRESS** AT PORTSMOUTH, **CHESAPEAKE** AT NORFOLK, **CONSTELLATION** AT BALTIMORE. THEY WERE DESIGNED BY A FREE-THINKING PHILADELPHIA QUAKER NAMED JOSHUA HUMPHREYS. AND WERE THEY STOUT SHIPS? YOU CAN SEE OLD **CONSTITUTION** AFLOAT IN BOSTON NAVY YARD TO THIS DAY!





SKILL, HARD WORK AND GUMPTION MADE A COMBINATION HARD TO BEAT. THE EARLY AMERICANS ADDED SOMETHING MORE. CALL IT IMAGINATION OR INGENUITY. PIONEERS, THEY WEREN'T AFRAID TO THINK FOR THEMSELVES, TO TRY SOMETHING NEW. TAKE WARSHIPS. BRITISH FRIGATES, HEAVILY ARMED, WERE SLOW. FRENCH, FAST, CARRIED LIGHT GUNS. EUROPEANS SAID YOU COULDN'T HAVE BOTH SPEED AND FIRE-POWER. HUMPHREYS SAID, "HA!" TRYING SOMETHING NEW, HE GAVE **UNITED STATES** HEAVY GUNS FOR POWER—AND CLIPPER LINES FOR SPEED.

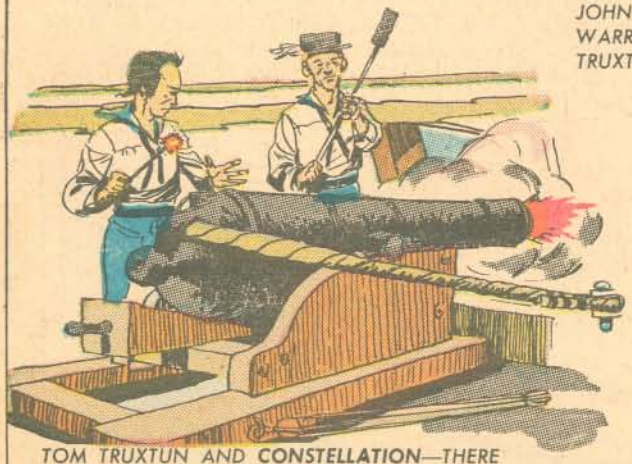
TOUGHER THAN THE AVERAGE BRITISH SPECIMENS, THE FRIGATES DESIGNED BY HUMPHREYS HAD THICKER HULLS AND STOUTER SPARS. LEAN IN THE FLANKS AND SHAPED FOR SPEED, THEY LOOKED LIKE COMMERCIAL VESSELS, AND WHEN HUMPHREYS ARMED THEM WITH 44 GUNS, THE EUROPEAN "EXPERTS" THOUGHT THE AMERICANS WERE CRAZY. CRAZY LIKE A FOX, HUMPHREYS REINFORCED THE DECKS TO CARRY EXTRA CANNON, AND TURNED THE FRIGATES INTO POCKET BATTLESHIPS. **CONSTITUTION**—THERE WAS A WARSHIP! SHE WAS 175 FEET LONG. HER MAINMAST TOWERED AT 180 FEET SHE COULD CARRY 50 GUNS. SHE STUCK ON THE WAYS AT BOSTON, AND HAD TO BE LAUNCHED BY LEVERS AND JACKS. SO BRITISH CRITICS CALLED HER A JONAH! BUT THIS JONAH WAS GOING TO SWALLOW SOME WHALES.



JOHN ADAMS FOUNDED THE NEW UNITED STATES NAVY. THEY CALLED CONGRESS THE NAVY'S "FATHER," BUT ADAMS FOSTERED THE INFANT. "THE **CONSTITUTION**," HE WROTE FROM BOSTON, "EMPLOYS MY THOUGHTS AND MY DREAMS."

NO SHIP IS BETTER THAN THE MEN IN HER. FOR THE U. S. NAVY, ADAMS WANTED THE BEST. MERCHANT SEAMAN GOT $10 A MONTH? ADAMS PUSHED A BILL TO PAY NAVY SAILORS $15. NO SHANGHAIED RECRUITS, EITHER. AND TOP RATIONS FOR GOOD HANDS.

WHO WAS TO LEAD THE NEWBORN U. S. NAVY? BECAUSE A CREW IS NO BETTER THAN ITS CAPTAIN, ADAMS WANTED THE BEST OFFICERS AVAILABLE. AMONG FIRST LEADERS CHOSEN WERE REVOLUTIONARY VETERANS RICHARD DALE, JOHN BARRY AND THOMAS TRUXTUN. SEA WARRIOR OF THE PAUL JONES PATTERN, CAPTAIN TRUXTUN SET THE STANDARD HIGH.

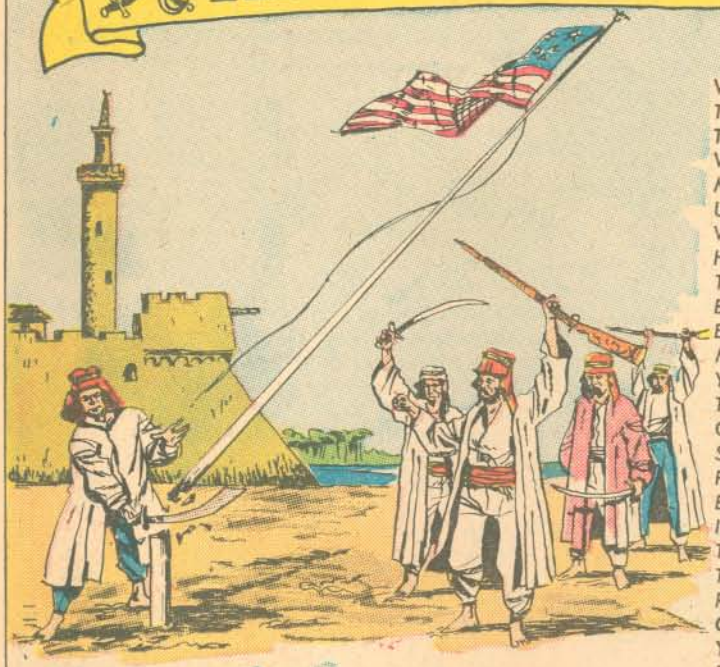


TOM TRUXTUN AND **CONSTELLATION**—THERE WAS A TEAM! CHAMPIONS OF THE SEA IN 1799. THAT WAS THE YEAR THE FRENCH GOT TOUGH AND DECIDED TO STOP AMERICAN SHIPPING IN THE CARIBBEAN. OFF NEVIS THAT FEBRUARY, FRENCH FRIGATE **INSURGENTE** CHALLENGED **CONSTELLATION.** TRUXTUN AND COMPANY BLEW THE FRENCHMAN TO RUBBISH.

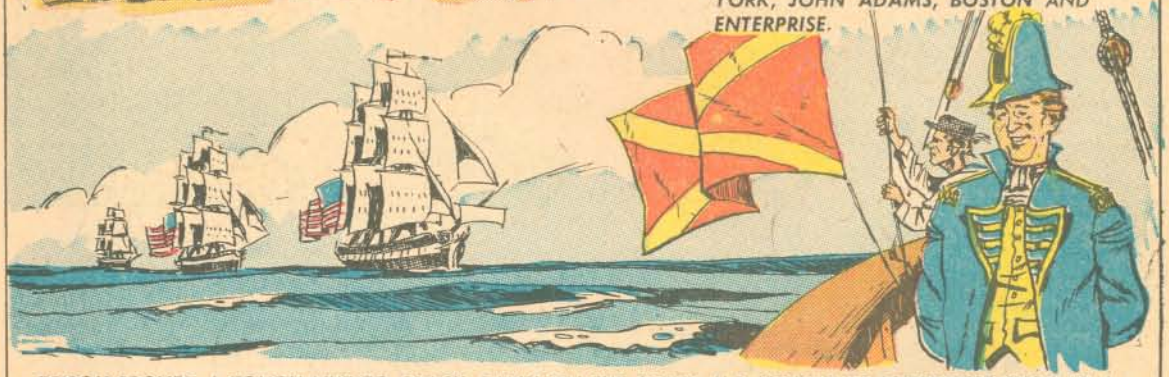
FAIR DISCIPLINE, SHARP TARGET PRACTICE, HIGH MORALE—**CONSTELLATION** HAD IT UNDER TRUXTUN. AND IT SHOWED WHEN SHE MET FRENCH FRIGATE **VENGEANCE** IN 1800. "MY POST IS HERE!" CRIED YOUNG MIDSHIPMAN JARVIS, REFUSING TO LEAVE A SHATTERED MASTHEAD UNTIL ORDERED.

HAMMER AND TONGS **CONSTELLATION** TRADED BROADSIDES WITH **VENGEANCE.** THE FRENCHMAN WAS A SUPER FRIGATE WITH 52 GUNS. BUT **CONSTELLATION'S** SCANT 40 WERE BETTER AIMED, BETTER MANNED. IN THE END **VENGEANCE** WAS BATTERED TO SHAMBLES—160 CASUALTIES AGAINST **CONSTELLATION'S** 39. IT WAS THE LAST MAJOR BATTLE IN THE NAVAL WAR WITH FRANCE—A LESSON REMEMBERED BY NAPOLEAN. WITH THE SPIRIT OF TRUXTUN AND JARVIS ABOARD, THE NEW U.S.N. COULDN'T LOSE.

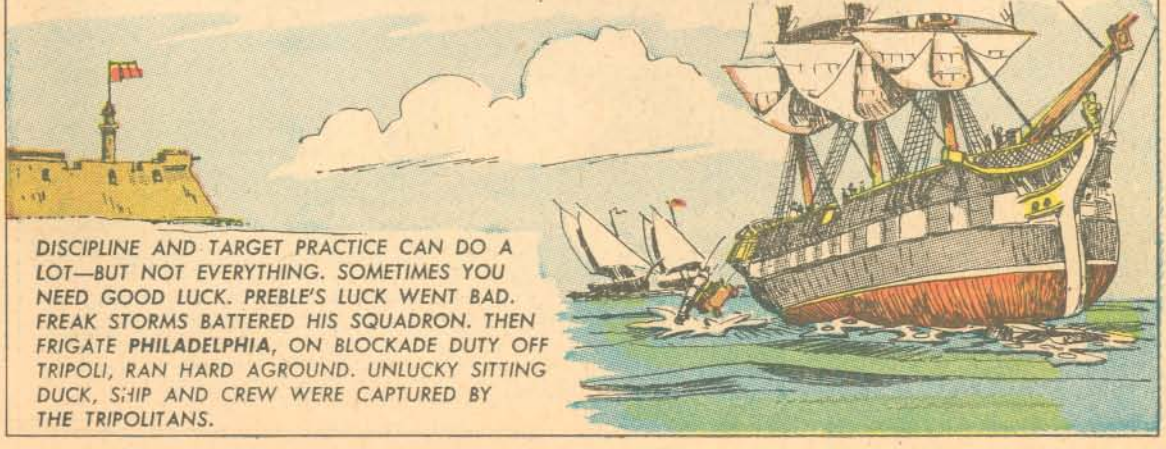
THE TRIPOLITAN WAR



WHILE THE NEW U. S. NAVY WAS TEACHING THE FRENCH A LESSON IN THE CARIBBEAN, THE BARBARY PIRATES WERE RUNNING RAMPANT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. IMAGINE IT! THE UNITED STATES HAD SIGNED A TREATY WITH TRIPOLI AGREEING TO PAY A HUGE SUM FOR THE RIGHT TO SAIL OFF THE TRIPOLITAN COAST. NOW THE BASHAW OF TRIPOLI DEMANDED AN ENORMOUS BONUS AND AN AMERICAN-MADE WARSHIP AS A GIFT. WHEN THE YANKEE CONSUL IN TRIPOLI SAID "NO!" THE BASHAW DECLARED WAR AND CHOPPED DOWN THE AMERICAN FLAG. SO THOMAS JEFFERSON, NEW AMERICAN PRESIDENT, THOUGHT IT HIGH TIME TO BASH DOWN THE GREEDY OLD BASHAW. IN 1802 CONGRESS VOTED WAR ON TRIPOLI. OUT SAILED A U.S. SQUADRON TO WIN FREEDOM OF THE MEDITERRANEAN. IN THE SQUADRON WERE **CONSTELLATION, CHESAPEAKE, NEW YORK, JOHN ADAMS, BOSTON** AND **ENTERPRISE.**



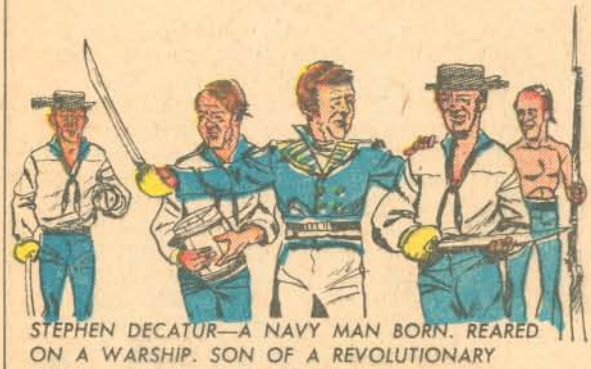
TRIPOLI PROVED A TOUGH NUT TO CRACK. EARLY ON THE SCENE. U.S. SCHOONER **ENTERPRISE** SHOT UP A TRIPOLITAN CORSAIR. NEW FRIGATE **JOHN ADAMS** SHOT UP ANOTHER. THEN THE TRIPOLITANS PULLED IN THEIR SHIPS AND SAT BEHIND THEIR FORTS. THE U.S. SQUADRON LOLLED AT DISTANCE. SO **CONSTITUTION** WAS SENT TO LEAD THE ATTACK. UNDER COMMODORE EDWARD PREBLE THE SQUADRON TIGHTENED UP. TRAINED BY TRUXTUN, PREBLE WOULD TRUCKLE TO NO TRIPOLITAN. GOOD OFFICER? ONE OF THE GREATEST.



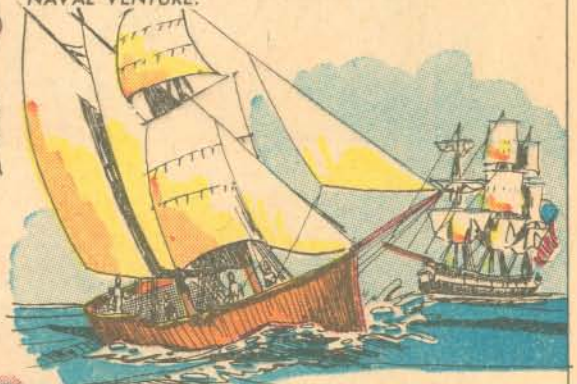
DISCIPLINE AND TARGET PRACTICE CAN DO A LOT—BUT NOT EVERYTHING. SOMETIMES YOU NEED GOOD LUCK. PREBLE'S LUCK WENT BAD. FREAK STORMS BATTERED HIS SQUADRON. THEN FRIGATE **PHILADELPHIA**, ON BLOCKADE DUTY OFF TRIPOLI, RAN HARD AGROUND. UNLUCKY SITTING DUCK, SHIP AND CREW WERE CAPTURED BY THE TRIPOLITANS.

STEPHEN DECATUR

IT WAS BAD ENOUGH TO LOSE **PHILADELPHIA**. WORSE TO SEE HER FLYING THE BASHAW'S FLAG. AN AMERICAN WARSHIP IN THE HANDS OF WHISKERED PIRATES! PREBLE CALLED FOR A PARTY TO ENTER TRIPOLI HARBOR AND BLOW UP THE CAPTURED VESSEL. ANY VOLUNTEERS? YES, SIR! UP STEPPED LIEUTENANT DECATUR. STEPHEN DECATUR, SIR! READY FOR ANY HAZARDOUS NAVAL VENTURE.



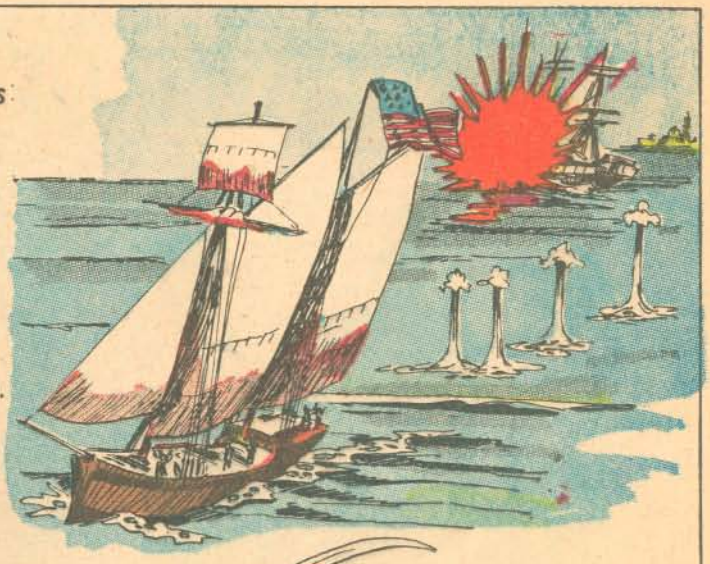
STEPHEN DECATUR—A NAVY MAN BORN. REARED ON A WARSHIP. SON OF A REVOLUTIONARY VETERAN. BROTHER JAMES SERVING IN THE SQUADRON. PREBLE KNEW THESE DECATURS, ESPECIALLY THIS ONE. HE LET THE LIEUTENANT SELECT A CREW OF BURLEY TARS FOR THE RISKY MISSION AT HAND. STEPHEN DECATUR—JUST THE FIREBRAND TO BLOW UP **PHILADELPHIA**.



NIGHT OF FEBRUARY 16, 1804. PACKED INTO A NATIVE KETCH APTLY NAMED **INTREPID**, DECATUR AND 83 VOLUNTEERS SAILED INTO TRIPOLI HARBOR. ARMED ONLY WITH CUTLASSES, THE AMERICANS WERE DISGUISED AS ARAB TRADERS. **PHILADELPHIA** LOOMED IN THE DARK. DECATUR AND HIS MEN CROUCHED, READY TO SPRING.

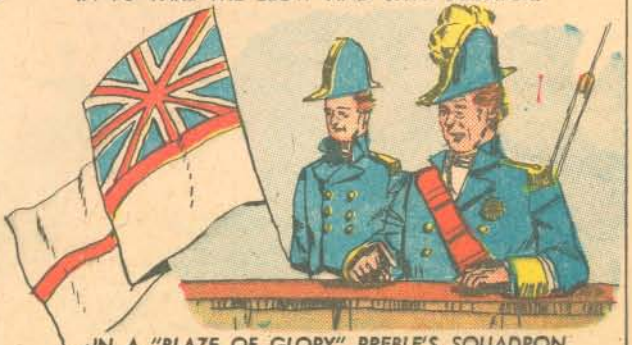
THE WATCH ON **PHILADELPHIA** HAILED IN ARABIC "WHO GOES THERE?" **INTREPID'S** PILOT, A SICILIAN, ANSWERED IN NATIVE TONGUE. WHILE WATCH AND PILOT JABBERED LIKE PARROTS, **INTREPID** CREPT ALONGSIDE THE DARK FRIGATE. QUIET AS CATS, THE YANKEE SAILORS WENT UP THE WARSHIP'S SIDE. TOO LATE THE TRIPOLITANS SAW THE GLEAM OF STEEL. WITH A SHOUT, DECATUR LED THE CHARGE. STORMING FORWARD, THE YANKEE TARS DROVE THE SCREAMING PIRATES ACROSS **PHILADELPHIA'S** DECK.

CUTLASSES AGAINST SCIMITARS, YANKEES AND TRIPOLITANS CLASHED IN WILD COMBAT. THEN WHILE LUSTY TARS PINNED FRANTIC PIRATES TO THE FRIGATE'S BOWS, DECATUR RUSHED A DEMOLITION PARTY AFT—DOWN TO THE GUN DECK—DOWN TO THE MAGAZINE. IN A TRICE THE FUZES WERE ATTACHED TO POWDER KEGS. "ALL SET, NOW?" BLOW UP YOUR MATCHES, BOYS!" WORKING FAST, THE BOYS BLEW THE MATCHES. FASTER YET, THEY GOT TOPSIDE AND OVERSIDE. AWAY IN **INTREPID**. OFF DOWN THE HARBOR. RIGHT UNDER THE GUNS OF TRIPOLI'S FORTS. "YOU AMERICANS WILL NEVER STAND THE SMELL OF POWDER," AN ENGLISHMAN AT MALTA HAD SNEERED THE PREVIOUS WINTER. BUT DECATUR AND HIS MEN LOVED THE SMELL. ESPECIALLY THAT NIGHT WHEN **PHILADELPHIA** BLEW UP WITH A BLAST THAT ECHOED INTO NAVAL HISTORY.



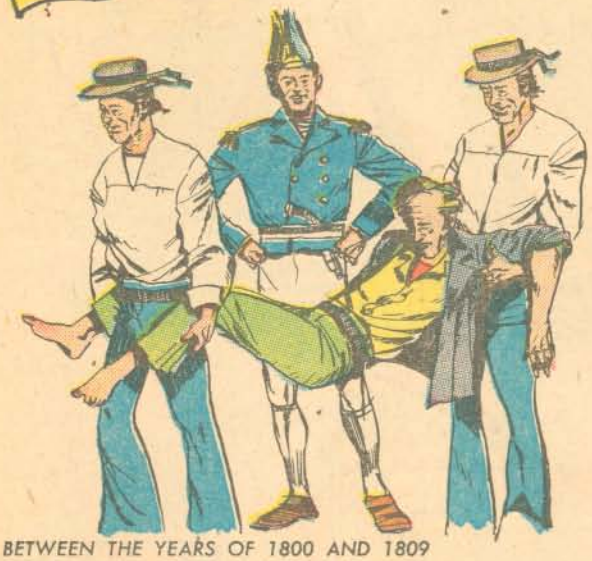
WITH **PHILADELPHIA** GONE, PREBLE TIGHTENED THE BLOCKADE. THAT SUMMER DECATUR'S BROTHER WAS KILLED IN A GUNBOAT ACTION. INFURIATED, DECATUR LED AN ATTACK ON THE PIRATE FLOTILLA. IN COMBAT HE HIMSELF WAS ALMOST SLAIN BY A SCIMITAR-SWINGING GIANT. LEGEND SAYS SEAMAN REUBEN JAMES RUSHED IN TO TAKE THE BLOW AND SAVE DECATUR.

FROSTY-EYED, PREBLE CHEWED OUT DECATUR FOR TAKING TOO MANY RISKS. LATER, PREBLE APOLOGIZED FOR SNAPPING IN ANGER. NOT EASY FOR A SENIOR OFFICER TO ADMIT A MISTAKE. BUT PREBLE WAS AS BIG AS HE WAS SENIOR.



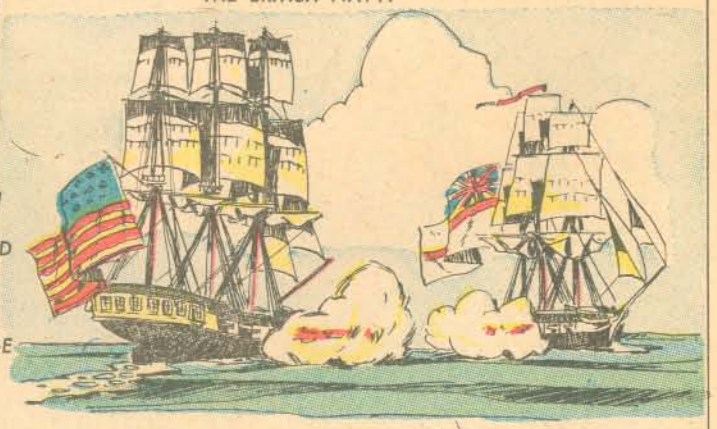
IN A "BLAZE OF GLORY" PREBLE'S SQUADRON SAILED HOME FROM TRIPOLI. EVEN BRITISH ADMIRAL NELSON WAS IMPRESSED. SPEAKING OF THE **PHILADELPHIA** EXPLOIT, HE CALLED IT THE "MOST DARING ACT OF THE AGE." AMERICA CHEERED PREBLE AND "PREBLE'S BOYS."

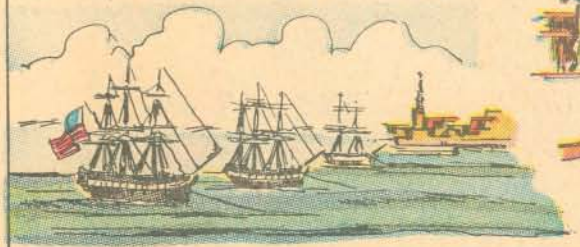
THE WAR OF 1812



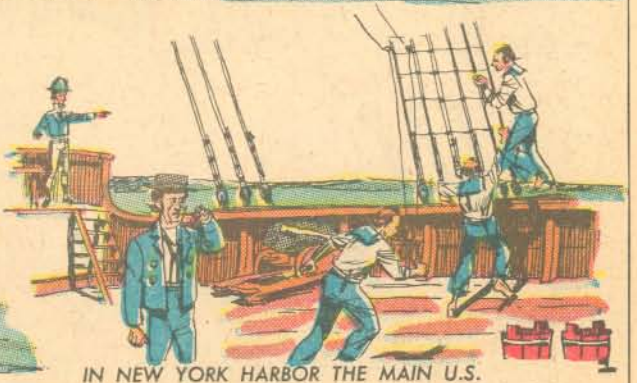
BETWEEN THE YEARS OF 1800 AND 1809 SOME 2,000 AMERICAN MARINERS WERE SNATCHED FROM SHIPS AND WATERFRONTS AND FORCED TO SERVE IN BRITAIN'S ROYAL NAVY. "IMPRESSMENT" THE ENGLISH CALLED IT, CLAIMING THESE AMERICANS WERE BRITISH SUBJECTS. ANGRY AMERICANS CALLED IT SOMETHING ELSE—"SHANGHAIING." WAR ALMOST EXPLODED IN 1807 WHEN BRITISH WARSHIP **LEONARD** WAYLAID U.S. FRIGATE **CHESAPEAKE** AND SNATCHED FOUR NAVY MEN RIGHT OUT FROM UNDER THE AMERICAN FLAG. IN VAIN PRESIDENT THOMAS JEFFERSON TRIED PEACEFUL DIPLOMACY. OLD KING GEORGE HAD GONE DODDERING INSANE, AND HIS REGENT AND ADVISERS DID NOT WANT PEACE. SO THE NEXT AMERICAN PRESIDENT, JAMES MADISON, ORDERED U.S. SHIPS TO FIGHT IF INTERFERRED WITH. WHEN **H.M.S. LITTLE BELT** TRIED TO STOP U.S. FRIGATE **PRESIDENT**, AMERICAN GUNS BLASTED THE BRITISHER.

FREEDOM OF THE MEDITERRANEAN—THAT'S WHAT THE LITTLE U.S. NAVY FOUGHT FOR IN THE WAR AGAINST THE BARBARY PIRATES. THE WAR WAS NOT QUITE OVER WHEN PREBLE LED HIS SQUADRON BACK TO THE STATES. TRIPOLI WOULD HAVE TO WAIT BECAUSE A BIGGER WAR WAS BREWING—A WAR FOR FREEDOM OF THE ATLANTIC—FREEDOM OF THE SEAS. THAT MEANT CONFLICT WITH GREAT BRITAIN, AND AMERICA NEEDED EVERY WARSHIP AVAILABLE. WHY THE FIGHT? WELL, BRITTANIA RULED THE WAVE. AND ENGLAND FEARED AMERICAN COMMERCIAL RIVALRY. THE ENGLISH WANTED TO KEEP THE OCEAN TRADE ROUTES UNDER JOHN BULL'S THUMB. TO STIFLE YANKEE COMPETITION, THEY PASSED MARITIME LAWS AGAINST U.S. SHIPPING. MEANTIME, THEY BEGAN TO SEIZE AMERICAN SAILORS AND "IMPRESS" THEM INTO THE BRITISH NAVY.

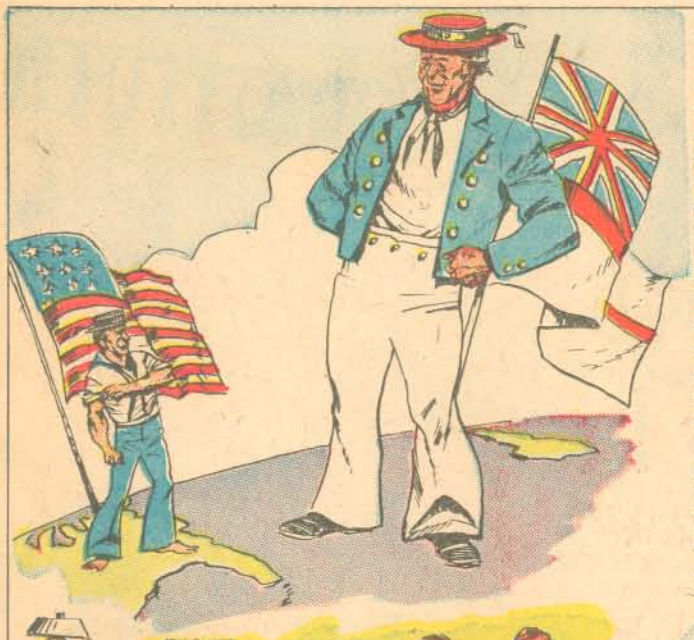




THE BRITISH HOWLED BLOODY MURDER WHEN **PRESIDENT** CUT A NOTCH IN **LITTLE BELT**. WAR ENSUED IN JUNE 1812 AFTER PRESIDENT MADISON FOUND BRITISH AGENTS TRYING TO SUBVERT NEW ENGLAND. WITH SEA WAR IN PROSPECT, THE LITTLE U.S.N. WASN'T READY.

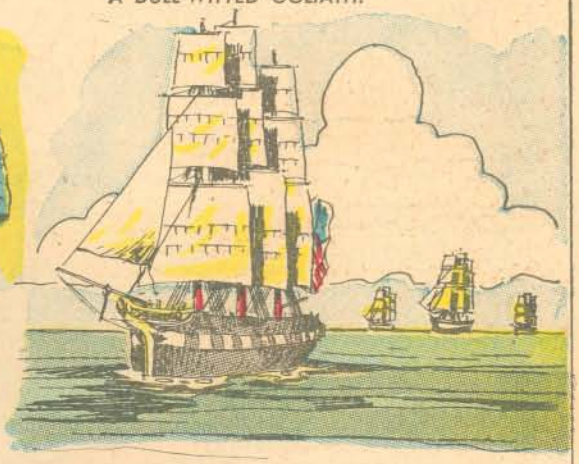


IN NEW YORK HARBOR THE MAIN U.S. SQUADRON WAS CAUGHT WITH ITS ANCHORS DOWN. SOMEHOW CONGRESS HAD EXPECTED TO WAGE A LAND WAR. COMMODORE RODGERS WAS ORDERED TO STAY IN PORT. SPUNKY, HE SAILED OUT TO FIGHT BEFORE THE ORDER ARRIVED.

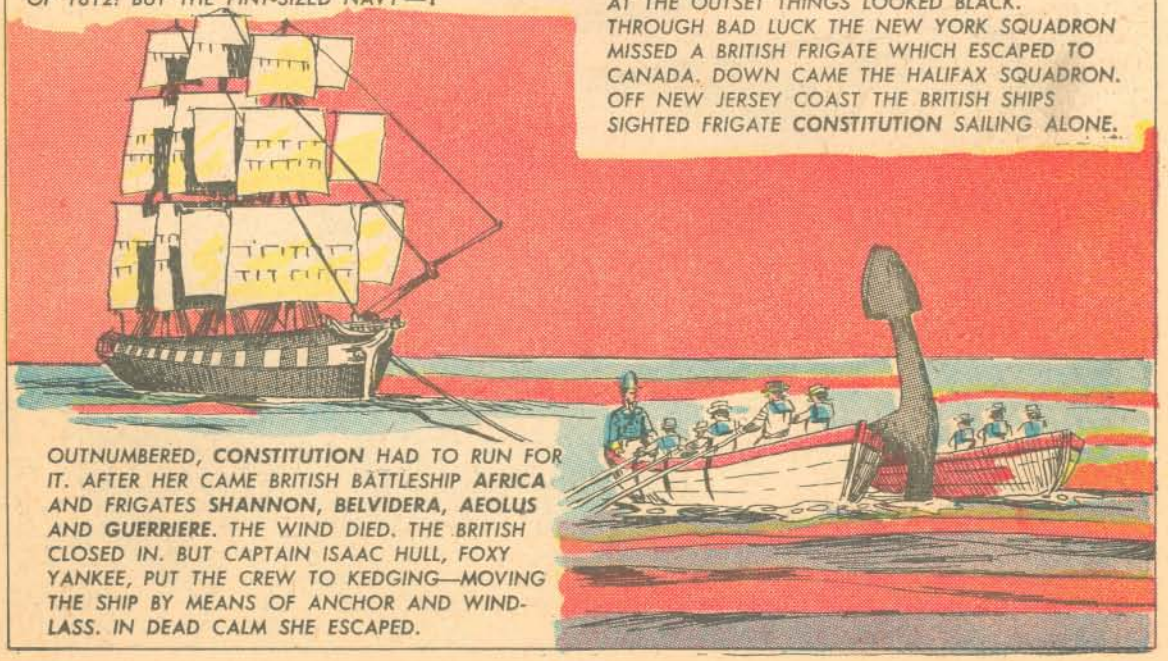


JACK FACING GIANT, THE LITTLE U.S. NAVY SQUARED OFF TO TACKLE THE BRITISH. TALK ABOUT ODDS! IN 1812 AMERICA POSSESSED ONLY 7 FRIGATES. BRITAIN OWNED 160. THE AMERICANS DID NOT HAVE A SINGLE LINE-OF-BATTLE SHIP. ROYAL NAVY HAD 230, INCLUDING HUGE **H.M.S. CALEDONIA** CARRYING 120 GUNS. ALTOGETHER THE U.S.N. COULD MUSTER ONLY 18 WARSHIPS. BRITAIN BOASTED OVER 800! LUCKILY BRITAIN WAS AT WAR WITH FRANCE IN 1812, HER NAVY BUSY WITH NAPOLEON'S. EVEN SO, THE BRITISH FLEET IN HALIFAX OUTWEIGHED THE ENTIRE U.S.N. BUT SIZE ISN'T EVERYTHING. NO MILITARY FORCE IS BETTER THAN THE BRAINS WHICH RUN IT. AND BRITAIN'S ROYAL NAVY HAD GONE A LITTLE STALE, A LITTLE STUFFY. LED BY INDEPENDENT THINKERS, THE U.S. NAVY PITCHED IN LIKE A SMART LITTLE DAVID AGAINST A DULL-WITTED GOLIATH.

PLANNING A LAND WAR, CONGRESS CALLED FOR AN ARMY INVASION OF CANADA. NAVY LEADERS APPEALED FOR AN OCEAN CAMPAIGN. PRESIDENT MADISON FINALLY AGREED. POORLY TRAINED, THE U.S. ARMY FUMBLED THE BALL IN THE WAR OF 1812! BUT THE PINT-SIZED NAVY—!

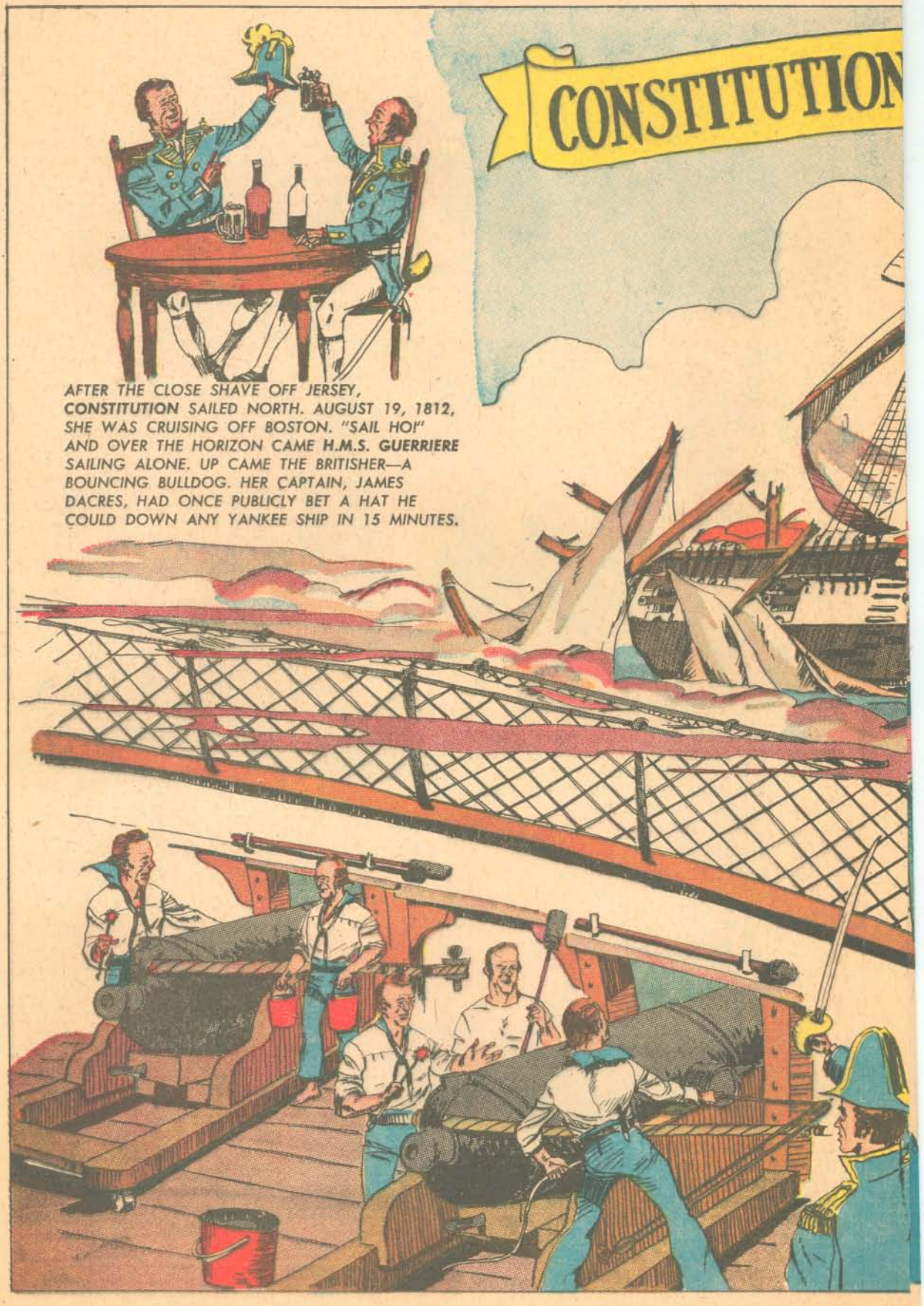


AT THE OUTSET THINGS LOOKED BLACK. THROUGH BAD LUCK THE NEW YORK SQUADRON MISSED A BRITISH FRIGATE WHICH ESCAPED TO CANADA. DOWN CAME THE HALIFAX SQUADRON. OFF NEW JERSEY COAST THE BRITISH SHIPS SIGHTED FRIGATE **CONSTITUTION** SAILING ALONE.



OUTNUMBERED, **CONSTITUTION** HAD TO RUN FOR IT. AFTER HER CAME BRITISH BATTLESHIP **AFRICA** AND FRIGATES **SHANNON, BELVIDERA, AEOLUS** AND **GUERRIERE**. THE WIND DIED. THE BRITISH CLOSED IN. BUT CAPTAIN ISAAC HULL, FOXY YANKEE, PUT THE CREW TO KEDGING—MOVING THE SHIP BY MEANS OF ANCHOR AND WINDLASS. IN DEAD CALM SHE ESCAPED.

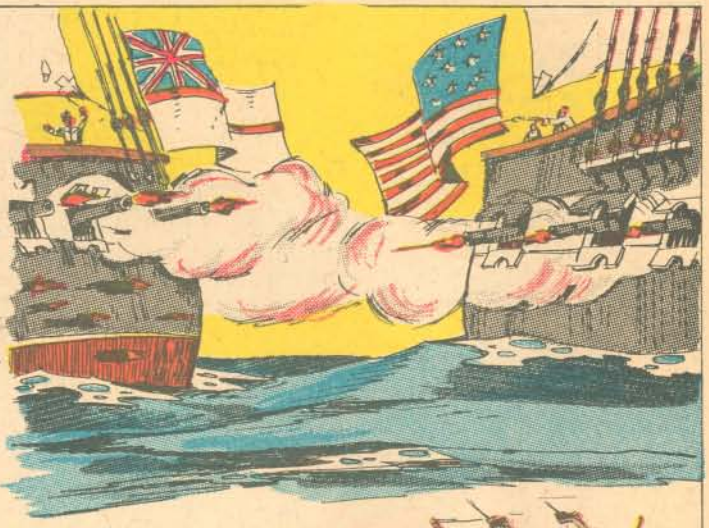
AFTER THE CLOSE SHAVE OFF JERSEY, **CONSTITUTION** SAILED NORTH. AUGUST 19, 1812, SHE WAS CRUISING OFF BOSTON. "SAIL HO!" AND OVER THE HORIZON CAME **H.M.S. GUERRIERE** SAILING ALONE. UP CAME THE BRITISHER—A BOUNCING BULLDOG. HER CAPTAIN, JAMES DACRES, HAD ONCE PUBLICLY BET A HAT HE COULD DOWN ANY YANKEE SHIP IN 15 MINUTES.

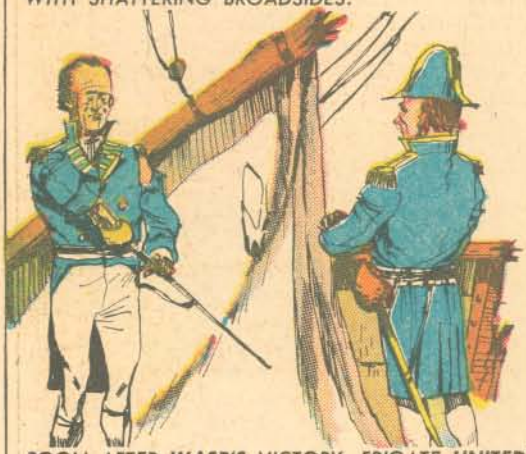


LIKE PUGILISTS THE TWO WARSHIPS MANEUVERED FORWARD. EAGER CAPTAIN DACRES OPENED FIRE AT LONG RANGE. FOXY HULL SAVED **CONSTITUTION'S** POWDER UNTIL SURE OF A SOLID HIT. THEN WHAM! WITH **GUERRIERE** AT 50 YARDS, HULL UNLEASHED A BROADSIDE. AND **CONSTITUTION** LET GO WITH A HAYMAKER! DOWN CAME **GUERRIERE'S** MIZZENMAST IN A CRASH OF CANVAS AND RIGGING. WHAM! DOWN CAME **GUERRIERE'S** MAINMAST. AS **GUERRIERE** STAGGERED OFF, **CONSTITUTION** LUFFED UNDER HER BOWS AND SLUGGED HER AGAIN. DACRES SWUNG HIS MANGLED SHIP ALONGSIDE AND TRIED TO BOARD. A BLIZZARD OF BULLETS SMOTE THE BOARDERS. **GUERRIERE** VEERED AWAY. "HULL HER! HULL HER!" SHOUTED THE YANKEES. OBLIGING, CAPTAIN HULL POURED BROADSIDE AFTER BROADSIDE INTO THE ENEMY'S HULL. IN 55 MINUTES **GUERRIERE** WAS A TOTAL RUIN, WITH 78 CASUALTIES. **CONSTITUTION,** UNHARMED, HAD ONLY 14 CASUALTIES. SO A GREAT AMERICAN WARSHIP GAINED ETERNAL FAME AS "OLD IRONSIDES."

IN DESPAIR CAPTAIN DACRES STRUCK HIS COLORS. DOWN CAME THE BRITISH FLAG OVER A FLOATING MASS OF WRECKAGE. LEAPING IN THE AIR IN DELIGHT, CAPTAIN HULL BURST THE SEAT OF HIS BRITCHES. WONDERFUL CLIMAX! LOSE A PAIR OF PANTS BUT WIN A BRAND NEW HAT— AND ONE OF THE GREATEST SEA BATTLES IN HISTORY. FIRST ROUND FOR THE U.S.N.

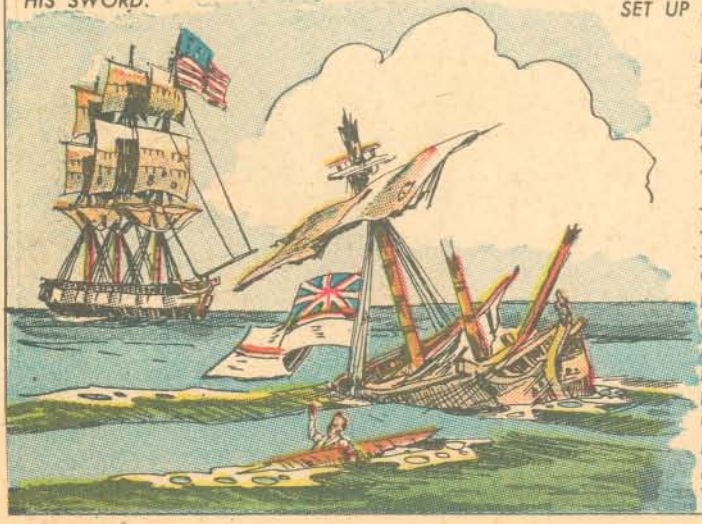
IN 1812 THE LITTLE U.S. NAVY SCORED A GALAXY OF STELLAR VICTORIES. ATTEMPTING TO INVADE CANADA, THE U.S. ARMY WAS THROWN BACK EVERYWHERE. BUT AT SEA THE STORY WAS DIFFERENT. WITH FLYING FLAGS AND HIGH MORALE, "PREBLE'S BOYS" SAILED OUT TO BEAT JOHN BULL, NO MATTER THE ODDS. AND WHEN THE ODDS WERE EVEN, SHIP FOR SHIP, THEY KNOCKED THE ROYAL NAVY GALLEY WEST. HOW DID THEY DO IT? BRAINS PLUS BRAWN. PIONEERING WITH IDEAS. TRYING SOMETHING NEW. SO WHEN AMERICAN WAR-SLOOP **WASP** ENCOUNTERS BRITISH WAR-SLOOP **FROLIC** THAT OCTOBER, AMERICAN SKIPPER JACOB JONES TRIES NEW GUNNERY. THE OLD METHOD: SHOOT AT THE RIGGING. "FIRE ON THE DOWN WAVE!" ORDERS JONES. "HIT HER NEAR THE WATERLINE!" SHOOTING LOW, **WASP** STUNG **FROLIC** TO DEATH WITH SHATTERING BROADSIDES.



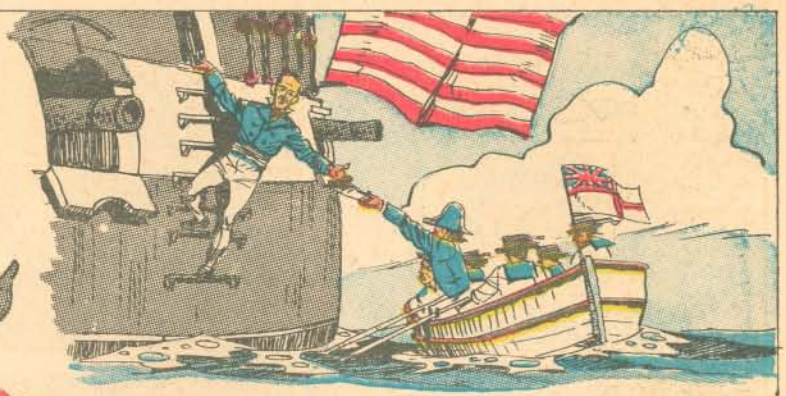


SOON AFTER **WASP'S** VICTORY, FRIGATE **UNITED STATES** SCORED ANOTHER. OF COURSE. SHE WAS UNDER CAPTAIN STEPHEN DECATUR WHEN SHE TACKLED **H.M.S. MACEDONIAN** OFF THE CANARY ISLANDS. CURTAINS FOR **MACEDONIAN.** TOUGH BRITISH CAPTAIN CARDEN WEPT, SURRENDERING HIS SWORD.

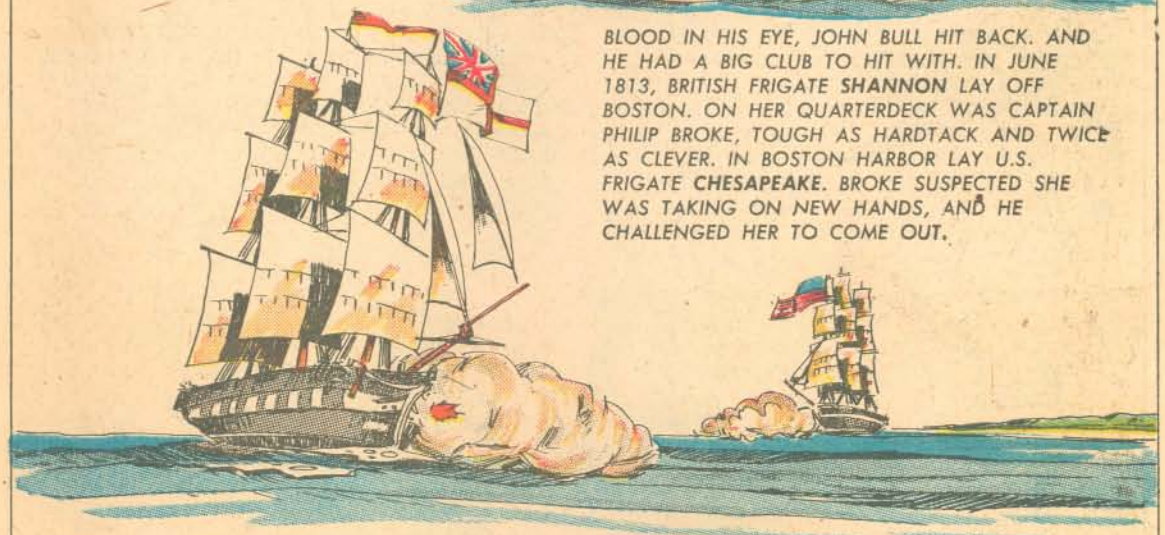
IN DECEMBER 1812 **CONSTITUTION** TOOK ON **H.M.S. JAVA** OFF BRAZIL. ALTHOUGH WOUNDED IN ACTION, YANKEE CAPTAIN WILLIAM BAINBRIDGE FOUGHT ON TO VICTORY. **JAVA'S** SURRENDER—ANOTHER TRIUMPH FOR "OLD IRONSIDES"—STUNNED THE ROYAL NAVY. LONDON SET UP A HOWL.



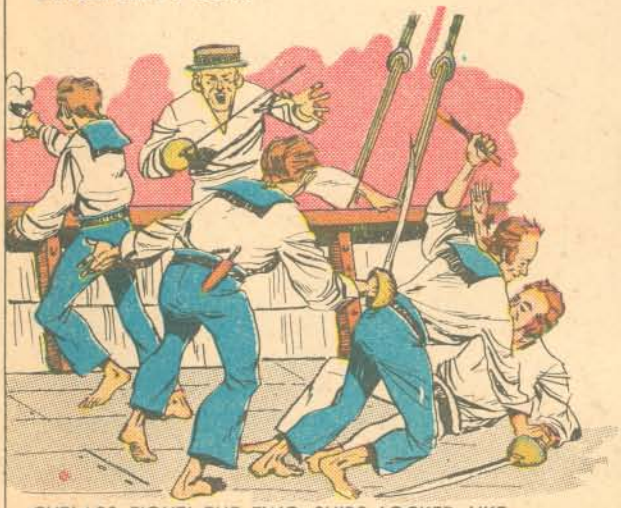
FIRST, **GUERRIERE**—A SHOCK TO BRITISH PRIDE. THEN **FROLIC** AND **MACEDONIAN.** "A NATIONAL DISGRACE," ROARED THE LONDON TIMES. "IN HEAVEN'S NAME, WHAT IS BEING DONE?" WHEN **CONSTITUTION** DID IT TO **JAVA,** A BRITISH JOURNAL WAILED, "THIS CALLS FOR SERIOUS REFLECTION!" SO U.S. WAR-SLOOP **HORNET** KEPT THE RECORD GOING. IN FEBRUARY 1813 SHE TRAPPED H.M. WAR-SLOOP **PEACOCK** OFF BRITISH GUIANA. SKIPPERED BY BIG JAMES LAWRENCE, **HORNET** FIRED TWO CLOBBERING BROADSIDES THAT BURIED PROUD **PEACOCK** IN A WATERY GRAVE. WORD OF THE **HORNET** VICTORY SHOOK JOHN BULL TO THE BOOTSTRAPS. WITH MARINE INSURANCE GOING UP, BRITISH MORALE WENT DOWN.



BLOOD IN HIS EYE, JOHN BULL HIT BACK. AND HE HAD A BIG CLUB TO HIT WITH. IN JUNE 1813, BRITISH FRIGATE **SHANNON** LAY OFF BOSTON. ON HER QUARTERDECK WAS CAPTAIN PHILIP BROKE, TOUGH AS HARDTACK AND TWICE AS CLEVER. IN BOSTON HARBOR LAY U.S. FRIGATE **CHESAPEAKE**. BROKE SUSPECTED SHE WAS TAKING ON NEW HANDS, AND HE CHALLENGED HER TO COME OUT.



CAPTAIN OF **CHESAPEAKE** WAS JAMES LAWRENCE, HERO OF THE **HORNET**. NOT THE FIGHTER TO TURN DOWN AN ENEMY'S CHALLENGE. BUT THE **CHESAPEAKE** CREW WASN'T QUITE READY WHEN HE TOOK HER OUT TO TACKLE FRIGATE **SHANNON**. AND **SHANNON'S** CREW WAS ONE OF THE BEST-TRAINED IN THE ROYAL NAVY. SO **CHESAPEAKE** WAS OUT-MANEUVERED AND OUT-FOUGHT. THE YANKEE GUNNERS TRADED BROADSIDE FOR BROADSIDE. BUT **SHANNON** GOT ALONGSIDE, AND BRITISHERS SWARMED OVER **CHESAPEAKE'S** DECK.



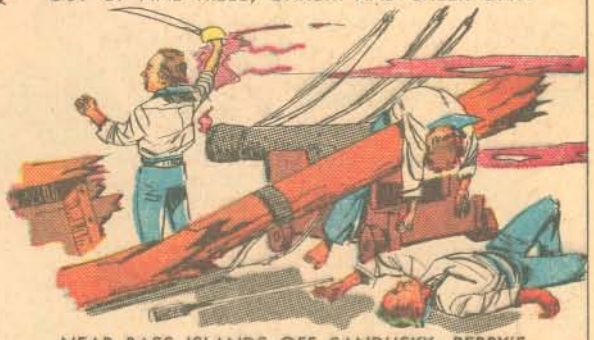
CUTLASS FIGHT! THE TWO SHIPS LOCKED LIKE WRESTLERS. BRITISH JACKS AND YANKEE TARS HAND-TO-HAND. LEADING THE BOARDERS, BRITISH CAPTAIN BROKE TOOK A GASH ACROSS THE SKULL. BUT JAMES LAWRENCE, HIT BY A SNIPER'S SHOT, FELL MORTALLY WOUNDED.

CARRIED BELOW, LAWRENCE LAY DYING. HE BEGGED HIS MEN TO FIGHT ON. "DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP!" UPROAR DROWNED HIS WORDS. THE **SHANNON** MEN WON. **CHESAPEAKE** WENT CAPTIVE TO HALIFAX. SO THE SHIP WAS LOST, BUT LAWRENCE LEFT THE NAVY AN ENDURING SLOGAN.

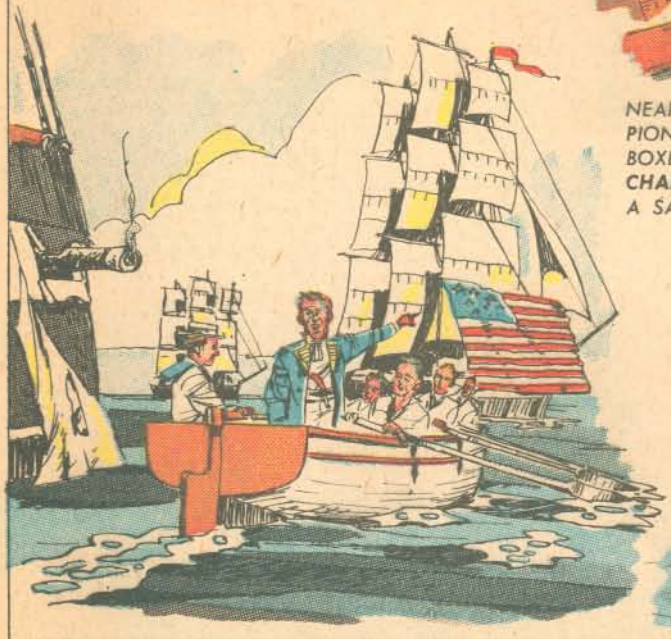
OLIVER HAZARD PERRY

TO THE WILDERNESS LAKE FRONT WENT A NAVAL BRIGADE FROM NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND. IN COMMAND WAS OLIVER HAZARD PERRY, A HUMAN PISTOL LOADED WITH IDEAS, PRIMED WITH INITIATIVE. IN SEPTEMBER 1813 HE LED HIS ERIE SQUADRON WEST TO MEET THE ENEMY.

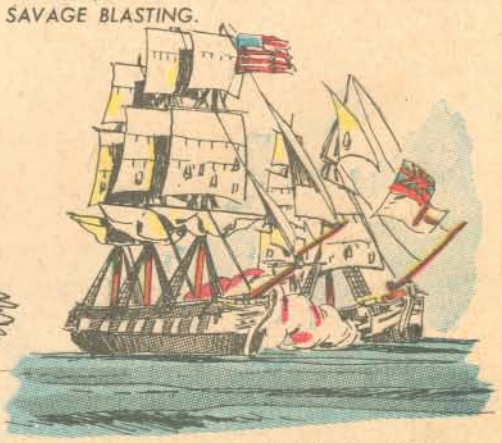
ON LAKE ONTARIO OPPOSING NAVAL FORCES SPARRED TO A STALEMATE. ERIE WATER WAS HOTTER. CONTROL OF THE LAKE MEANT CONTROL OF MICHIGAN AND OHIO. AT DETROIT THE BRITISH MUSTERED A STRONG SQUADRON TO WIN ERIE. IN WILDERNESS NEAR BUFFALO THE AMERICANS BUILT A COUNTERING SQUADRON OUT OF PINE TREES, OAKUM AND SHEER GRIT.



NEAR BASS ISLANDS OFF SANDUSKY, PERRY'S PIONEER SQUADRON MET THE BRITISH HEAD ON. BOXED IN BY **H.M.S. DETROIT** AND **QUEEN CHARLOTTE**, PERRY'S FLAGSHIP **LAWRENCE** TOOK A SAVAGE BLASTING.

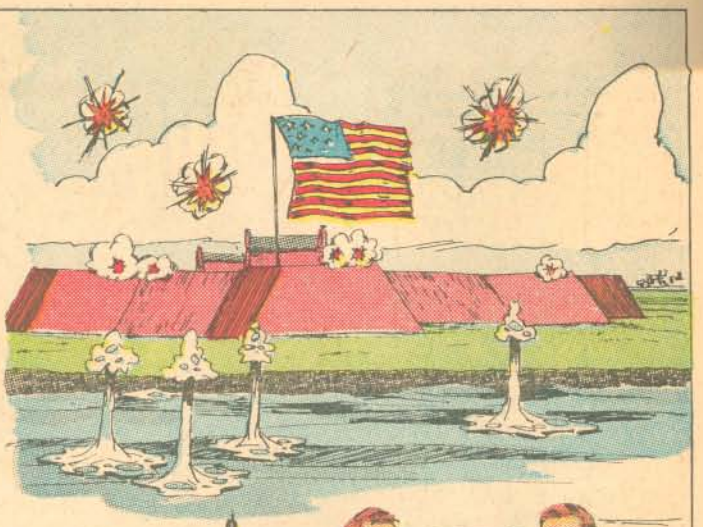


WITH ALL BUT ONE GUN SILENCED, PERRY HAD TO ABANDON **LAWRENCE**. UNDER AN IRON TEMPEST HE TRANSFERRED HIS FLAG TO BRIG **NIAGARA**. BRITISH COMMODORE BARCLAY THOUGHT PERRY HAD QUIT. BARCLAY'S ERROR. PERRY'S FLAG PROCLAIMED, "DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP!" PERRY HAD NO INTENTION OF GIVING UP **LAWRENCE**. OR OF LOSING LAKE ERIE.

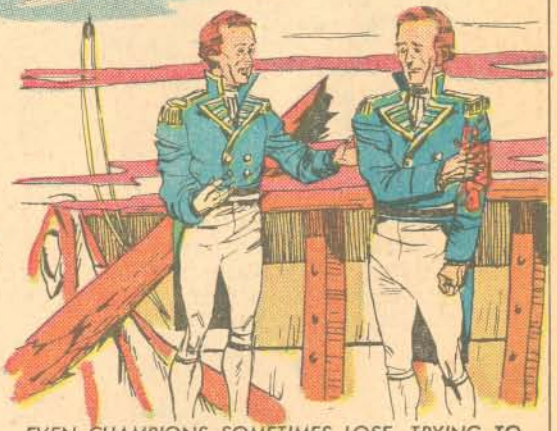


WITH GUNBOAT ESCORTS, **NIAGARA** HAD BEEN HOLDING BACK. SHE DID NOT HOLD BACK WITH PERRY ON BOARD. SLAM-BANG, PERRY DROVE HER INTO THE BRITISH SQUADRON. THUNDER ON LAKE ERIE! MELEE! STUNNED BY THE ONSLAUGHT, THE BRITISH SHIPS SURRENDERED. PERRY'S VICTORY MESSAGE ROUSED AMERICA. "WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY, AND THEY ARE OURS!"

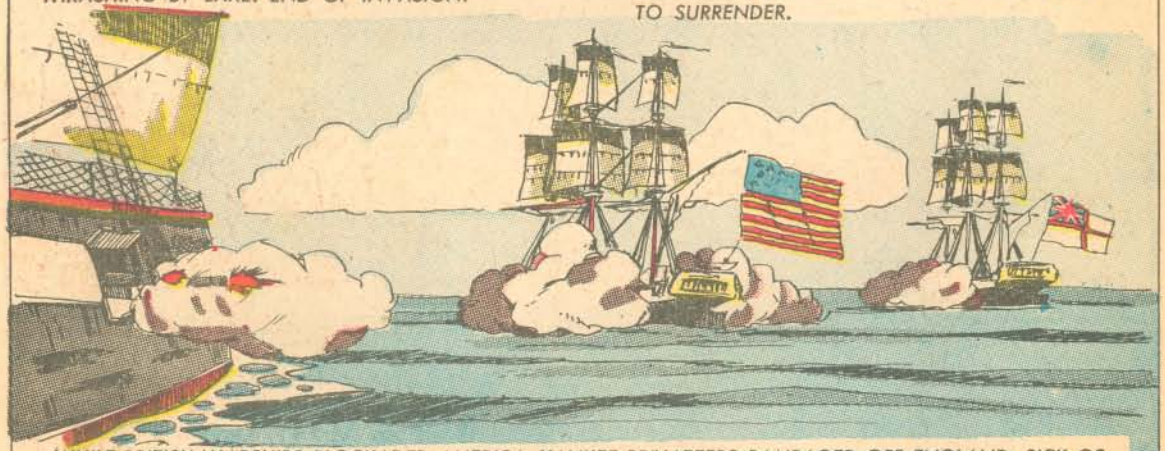
BATTLES WON ON THE ATLANTIC. FREEDOM'S FLAG PLANTED IN THE PACIFIC. LAKE ERIE AND THE NORTHWEST SAVED. THE U.S.N. SCORED THE NATION'S ONLY MAJOR TRIUMPHS IN 1813 AND 1814. BUT THE MINIATURE NAVY COULDN'T DO IT ALL. AND WHEN NAPOLEON COLLAPSED IN EUROPE IN 1814, THE BRITISH FLUNG ALL THEIR MILITARY MIGHT AT THE UNITED STATES. ROYAL NAVY FLEETS BLOCKADED THE AMERICAN SEABOARD. LANDING A POWERHOUSE ARMY UP THE CHESAPEAKE, THE BRITISH MARCHED ON WASHINGTON. AMERICAN MILITIA WERE BRUSHED ASIDE. THE NATION'S CAPITAL WAS BURNED. THEN THE INVADERS ADVANCED ON BALTIMORE. MANNING NAVAL GUNS ASHORE, AMERICAN SAILORS WERE A BULWARK IN THE DEFENSE. SO THE NAVY HELPED TO KEEP THE FLAG FLYING AT FORT McHENRY. WATCHING THAT NIGHT, MR. FRANCIS SCOTT KEY WROTE "THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER."



LAKE CHAMPLAIN, SEPTEMBER 1814. ANOTHER INVASION. OFF PLATTSBURG THE KING'S GUNBOATS RAN INTO YANKEE GUNBOATS UNDER TOM MACDONOUGH. BEFORE THEY COULD TAKE PLATTSBURG BY LAND, THE INVADERS TOOK A THRASHING BY LAKE. END OF INVASION.



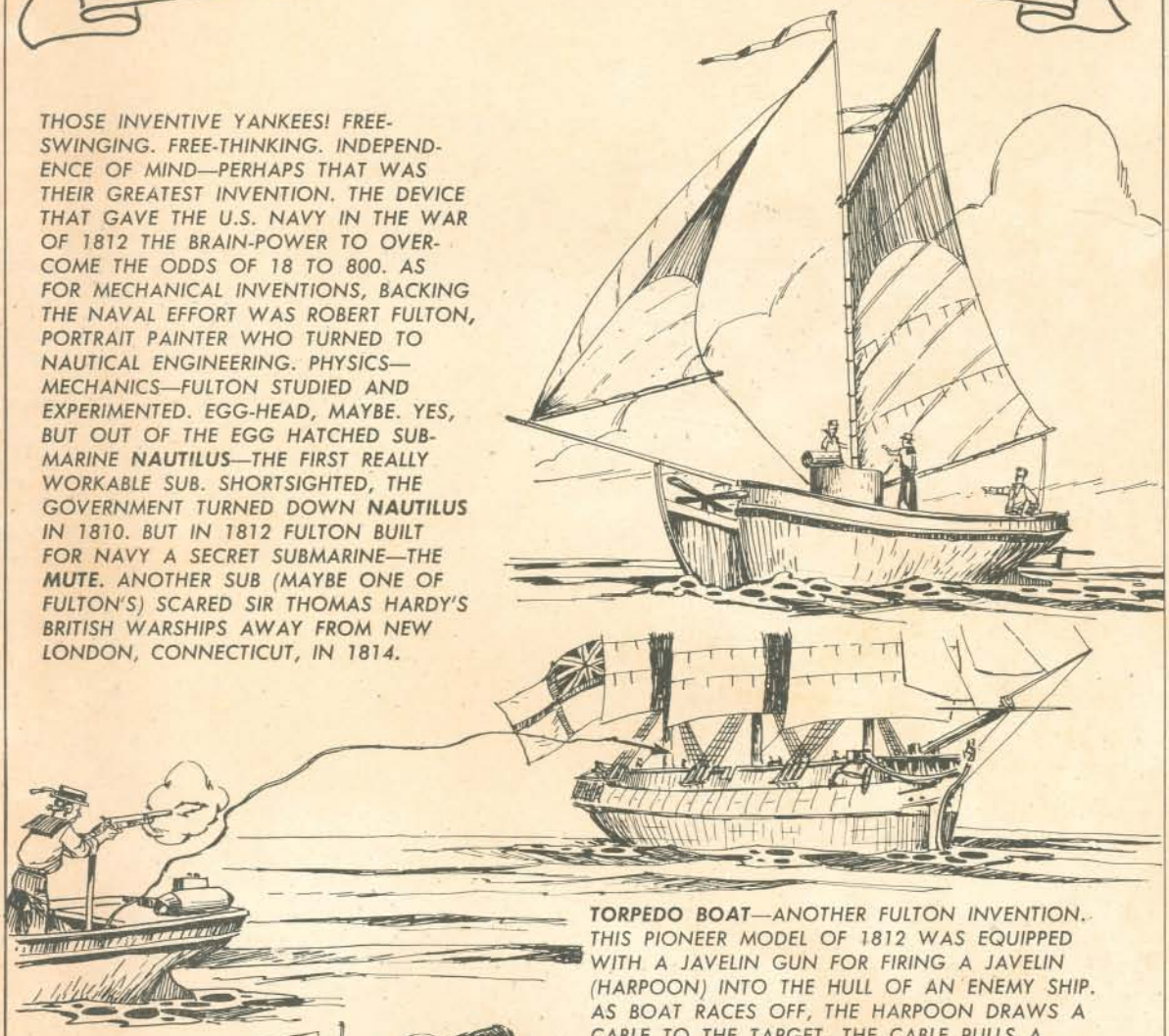
EVEN CHAMPIONS SOMETIMES LOSE. TRYING TO RUN THE NEW YORK BLOCKADE WITH FRIGATE **PRESIDENT**, DECEMBER 1814, STEPHEN DECATUR HIT HARD LUCK. IN BLINDING BLIZZARD HIS SHIP STRUCK SHOALS. TWO BRITISH FRIGATES CLOSED IN. CHASED BY **H.M.S. ENDYMION**, DECATUR'S SHIP TOOK A GUNLASHING. DECATUR WAS WOUNDED. BADLY BATTERED, **PRESIDENT** HAD TO SURRENDER.



WHILE BRITISH WARSHIPS BLOCKADED AMERICA, YANKEE PRIVATEERS RAMPAGED OFF ENGLAND. SICK OF WAR, ENGLISH MERCHANTS DEMANDED PEACE. LATE IN DECEMBER 1814 IT WAS SIGNED IN EUROPE, BUT THE NEWS DID NOT REACH NEW ORLEANS WHERE ANDY JACKSON SMASHED A FINAL INVASION FORCE. NOR DID IT REACH **U.S.S. CONSTITUTION**, FAR AT SEA. OFF MADEIRA IN FEBRUARY 1815 SHE FOUGHT A WHINGDING ACTION WITH **H.M.S. CYANE** AND **LEVANT**, BATTERING THE TWO TO SHAMBLES. "OLD IRONSIDES." UNDISPUTED CHAMPION OF THE WAR.

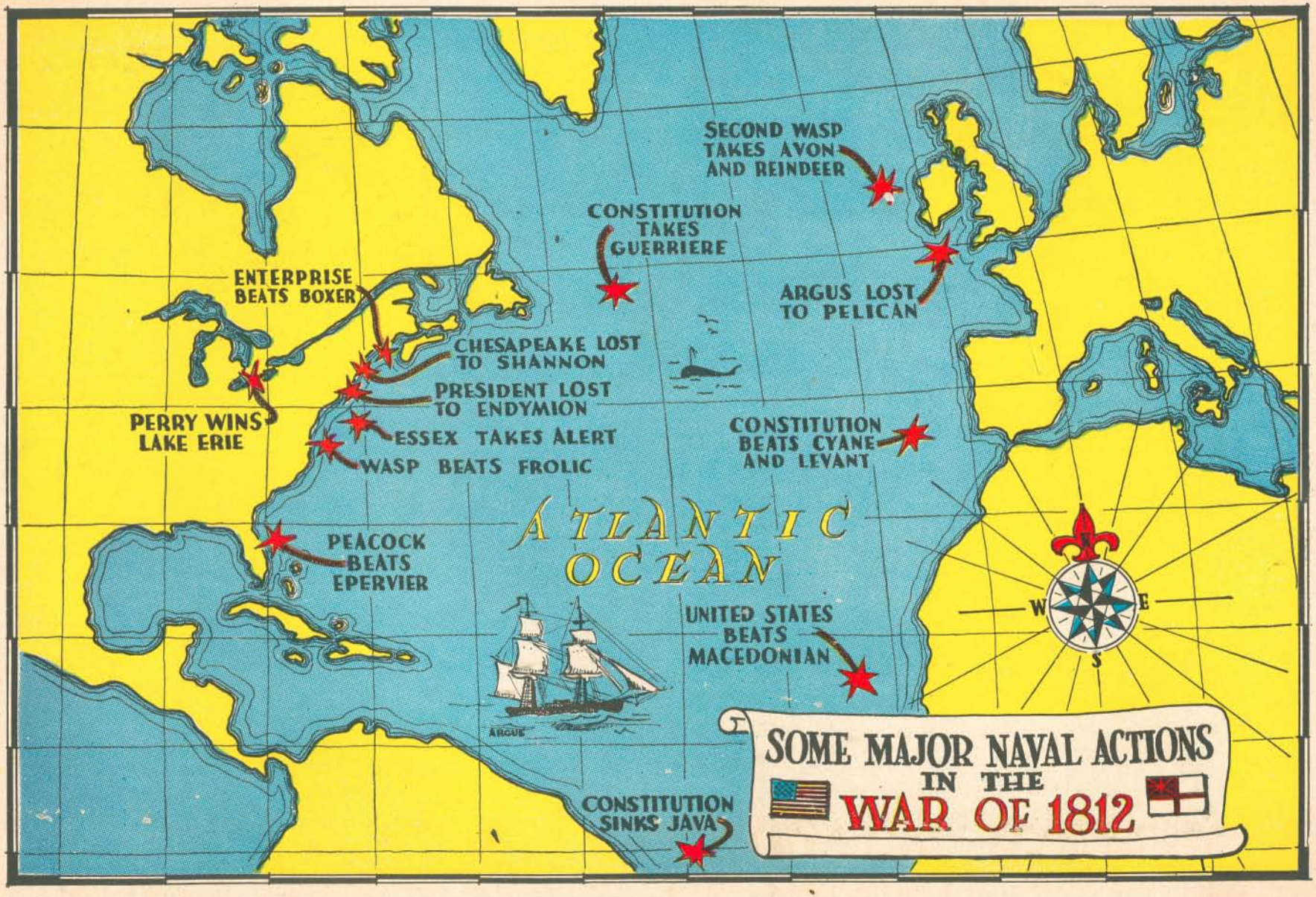
NAVAL • INVENTIONS • 1812

THOSE INVENTIVE YANKEES! FREE-SWINGING. FREE-THINKING. INDEPENDENCE OF MIND—PERHAPS THAT WAS THEIR GREATEST INVENTION. THE DEVICE THAT GAVE THE U.S. NAVY IN THE WAR OF 1812 THE BRAIN-POWER TO OVERCOME THE ODDS OF 18 TO 800. AS FOR MECHANICAL INVENTIONS, BACKING THE NAVAL EFFORT WAS ROBERT FULTON, PORTRAIT PAINTER WHO TURNED TO NAUTICAL ENGINEERING. PHYSICS—MECHANICS—FULTON STUDIED AND EXPERIMENTED. EGG-HEAD, MAYBE. YES, BUT OUT OF THE EGG HATCHED SUBMARINE **NAUTILUS**—THE FIRST REALLY WORKABLE SUB. SHORTSIGHTED, THE GOVERNMENT TURNED DOWN **NAUTILUS** IN 1810. BUT IN 1812 FULTON BUILT FOR NAVY A SECRET SUBMARINE—THE **MUTE.** ANOTHER SUB (MAYBE ONE OF FULTON'S) SCARED SIR THOMAS HARDY'S BRITISH WARSHIPS AWAY FROM NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT, IN 1814.



TORPEDO BOAT—ANOTHER FULTON INVENTION. THIS PIONEER MODEL OF 1812 WAS EQUIPPED WITH A JAVELIN GUN FOR FIRING A JAVELIN (HARPOON) INTO THE HULL OF AN ENEMY SHIP. AS BOAT RACES OFF, THE HARPOON DRAWS A CABLE TO THE TARGET. THE CABLE PULLS A CONTACT BOMB. BANG! IN THE OLD DAYS SUCH BOMBS WERE CALLED TORPEDOES.

WORLD'S FIRST STEAM-DRIVEN WARSHIP—**U.S.S. DEMOLOGOS.** DESIGNED BY FULTON FOR WAR OF 1812, SHE WAS COMPLETED IN NEW YORK JUST AT WAR'S END. NAVY'S NO. 1 STEAMER, SHE WAS BUILT LIKE A HUGE CATAMARAN WITH PADDLEWHEEL AMIDSHIPS FOR PROTECTION. BRITISH SPIES REPORTED HER ARMED WITH MECHANICAL LANCES, A TERRIBLE RAM AND HOSES FOR THROWING BOILING WATER. AMAZING NONE-SUCH, SHE COULD HAVE SMASHED THE BLOCKADE. BUT WAS AHEAD OF HER TIME—EVEN IN AMERICA.


SECOND WASP TAKES AVON AND REINDEER
CONSTITUTION TAKES GUERRIERE
ENTERPRISE BEATS BOXER
ARGUS LOST TO PELICAN
CHESAPEAKE LOST TO SHANNON
PRESIDENT LOST TO ENDYMION
PERRY WINS LAKE ERIE
ESSEX TAKES ALERT
CONSTITUTION BEATS CYANE AND LEVANT
WASP BEATS FROLIC
ATLANTIC OCEAN
PEACOCK BEATS EPERVIER
UNITED STATES BEATS MACEDONIAN
ARGUS
CONSTITUTION SINKS JAVA
W
E
S
SOME MAJOR NAVAL ACTIONS IN THE WAR OF 1812